



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

## **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board**

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **DOE's Environmental Management Program Born of Community Involvement; Participation Is Still Needed**

*by Kevin Westervelt*

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In the fall of 2009, the Department of Energy Oak Ridge Office (DOE) celebrated its 20 year anniversary of the Environmental Management (EM) program. With the passing of so much time since its origin, it is incumbent on all of us to remember that the EM program was essentially born out of community involvement. Ordinary citizens channeled into the public agencies their concerns that environmental cleanup be performed thoroughly, expeditiously, and safely with the result being an integrated approach on the federal, state, and local levels.

Today, the challenges of environmental cleanup at the Oak Ridge Reservation are intense on many fronts. Efficient prioritization of work, procuring adequate funding, employing new technologies wisely, and ensuring long-term stewardship are a few key issues that will demand public scrutiny.

As a citizen's advisory board, we at the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board would like to share our perspective on these challenges. The effective resolution of these issues in a timely manner will have a profound effect on the economic future, and ultimately the way of life, for this region.

An infusion of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), commonly referred to as the economic stimulus of 2009, has allowed a number of new EM projects to begin, and rapidly move forward. This funding has allowed some deteriorated facilities that posed high risk to be decontaminated and demolished while many others have started down the path to demolition. The beginning of this "footprint reduction" of facilities is an important precursor to future private-sector industrial development.

A critical challenge for DOE involves being able to maintain these older abandoned buildings in a safe and stable condition state until the time of demolition. Innovative strategic planning will be needed to prioritize the highest risk facilities and coordinate maintenance and surveillance activities. Based on the quantity of structures involved, it will be a substantial task to ensure that the pace of demolition exceeds any serious building decay. This is an issue that warrants close scrutiny by the stakeholders in addition to the professionals tasked with managing a solution.

With much of the ARRA funding significantly diminishing by the end of 2011, there is a concern that out-year budgetary constraints may impede environmental cleanup progress. In order to maintain this environmental cleanup momentum spurred by the release of ARRA funding since the spring of 2009, it will be essential that the EM program work efficiently and apply recent lessons learned to achieve increased productivity. An important component of this is the use of project management tools that are being emphasized across the complex to restrain work scope and costs.

As we embark on the final quarter of fiscal year 2010, many technical issues loom large including the completion of the Building K-25 demolition at East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP), historic preservation at K-25/ETTP, groundwater monitoring and remediation at Melton Valley, completion of a down-blend design process for uranium-233 at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and future landfill expansion needs. Many of these issues will be inherited by a new environmental cleanup contractor since the existing contract with Bechtel Jacobs will expire at the end of this year. This promises to be one of the most challenging periods in the history of the EM program.

With any such undertaking of this magnitude, it is imperative that the top priority must continue to be protection of public health. Vigilant compliance with worker safety standards must continue without compromise. And of course, the public must be properly informed and given the opportunity for input into the EM program. Continued stakeholder participation in the process is essential. As a citizen's advisory board, we ask you, the stakeholders, to join us in our endeavor to stay closely engaged and involved as the Oak Ridge Reservation pursues its environmental cleanup goals.

*ORSSAB meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m., at the DOE Information Center, 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike in Oak Ridge. The public is encouraged to attend, and a period is provided for public comment. For more information, see [www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab](http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab).*